

Inspection of a good school: Somerset Studio School

Knobsbury Lane, Radstock, Somerset BA3 3NQ

Inspection dates:

24 and 25 January 2024

Outcome

Somerset Studio School continues to be a good school.

The headteacher of this school is Bruce Hain. This school is part of Midsomer Norton Schools Partnership, which means other people in the trust also have responsibility for running the school. The trust is run by the chief executive officer, Alun Williams, and is overseen by a board of trustees, chaired by Anthony Thomas Wells.

What is it like to attend this school?

Pupils thrive at this inclusive and nurturing school. They are proud to belong to the Somerset Studio School community. Staff know pupils as individuals. A large proportion of pupils that attend this school have a special educational need and/or disability (SEND). These pupils are well supported to make progress on their chosen courses, but also to develop their personal and social skills. Parents and carers say the school takes the time to get to know their child well.

The school is a safe and welcoming environment. Classrooms are calm. Disruptive behaviour is extremely rare. Pupils celebrate what makes people different. They treat each other and visitors respectfully. Students in the sixth form are positive role models for younger pupils.

Pupils share their views and bring about change as part of the school council, for example. Pupils enjoy a range of extra-curricular activities, such as team-building activities in the woods. They participate in research and development, such as the orchid project and reptile club. Some pupils complete the Duke of Edinburgh's Award. Although many pupils benefit from such opportunities, the school does not have an overview of whether all pupils have equal access to all that the school has to offer.

What does the school do well and what does it need to do better?

The school provides an ambitious curriculum that is tailored to the interests and needs of its pupils. Although the 2023 key stage 4 published outcomes are lower than is typical nationally, pupils join the school at the age of 14 so do not experience their full curriculum journey here. The school, with the support of the trust, reviews the curriculum regularly

to ensure that pupils receive the most appropriate offer. For example, T levels have been introduced this academic year for students in the sixth form. The school also benefits from the expertise of trust leaders in subjects including English, mathematics and science.

Subject leaders carefully consider what is important for pupils to learn. They sequence this knowledge in a logical order and plan for it to be revisited regularly. This enables pupils to successfully build on what they already know. Teaching skilfully puts this into practice. Teachers use a range of approaches to check what pupils remember over time. This helps to inform curriculum planning and pupils' next steps.

Teachers are experts in their subjects. Staff demonstrate to pupils how their learning is transferable to industry. For example, in engineering, students in the sixth form grapple with the complexities of using computer-aided design software. In forensic science, students visit the local court and a prison to learn more about the criminal justice system.

Pupils with SEND are equipped with the resources they need to learn successfully. For example, some pupils use laptops so that they are familiar with this way of working prior to examinations. Staff use the information they receive about pupils' needs to tailor their teaching. The special educational needs and disabilities coordinator (SENDCo) works closely with pupils and their parents to support pupils with SEND to succeed.

Some pupils who join the school struggle with reading. The school quickly identifies these pupils. They are provided with appropriate support to help them to catch up. Additionally, staff understand the benefits of pupils reading a range of fiction and non-fiction texts regularly. They provide opportunities to do so within the school day.

The school encourages pupils to be aspirational for their futures. Pupils and students in the sixth form receive high-quality guidance to help them to plan their next steps in education or employment. The school has formed positive links with employers. Pupils have access to a broad and rich choice of work placements. They learn about how to transfer their knowledge to the workplace.

Pupils follow a varied and interesting personal development curriculum. They know how to keep themselves safe when online. They also have a strong awareness of the importance of looking after their mental health. Pupils have a mature and detailed understanding of the protected characteristics. They are proud to give examples of how the school community upholds them. Pupils are confident in their knowledge of British values and so are well prepared for life in modern Britain.

Staff say this is a special place to work in. They value being part of the wider multi-academy trust. It allows them to share good practice and access professional development opportunities. They then use this learning to enhance the quality of education that pupils and students in the sixth form receive.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

What does the school need to do to improve?

(Information for the school and appropriate authority)

- The school does not have a clear oversight of pupils' participation in extra-curricular activities. Therefore, they do not know which pupils benefit from these opportunities. The school should check that pupils have equal access to all that the school has to offer.

Background

When we have judged a school to be good, we will then normally go into the school about once every four years to confirm that the school remains good. This is called an ungraded inspection, and it is carried out under section 8 of the Education Act 2005. We do not give graded judgements on an ungraded inspection. However, if we find evidence that a school would now receive a higher or lower grade, then the next inspection will be a graded inspection, which is carried out under section 5 of the Act. Usually this is within one to two years of the date of the ungraded inspection. If we have serious concerns about safeguarding, behaviour or the quality of education, we will deem the ungraded inspection a graded inspection immediately.

This is the first ungraded inspection since we judged the school to be good in March 2018.

How can I feed back my views?

You can use [Ofsted Parent View](#) to give Ofsted your opinion on your child's school, or to find out what other parents and carers think. We use information from Ofsted Parent View when deciding which schools to inspect, when to inspect them and as part of their inspection.

The Department for Education has further [guidance](#) on how to complain about a school.

Further information

You can search for [published performance information](#) about the school.

In the report, '[disadvantaged pupils](#)' is used to mean pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND); pupils who meet the [definition of children in need of help and protection](#); pupils receiving statutory local authority support from a social worker; and pupils who otherwise meet the criteria used for deciding the school's [pupil premium funding](#) (this includes pupils claiming free school meals at any point in the last six years,

looked after children (children in local authority care) and/or children who left care through adoption or another formal route).

School details

Unique reference number	142125
Local authority	Bath and North East Somerset Council
Inspection number	10298039
Type of school	Secondary Comprehensive
School category	Academy studio school
Age range of pupils	14 to 19
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Gender of pupils in sixth-form provision	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	130
Of which, number on roll in the sixth form	67
Appropriate authority	Board of trustees
Chair of trust	Anthony Thomas Wells
CEO	Alun Williams
Headteacher	Bruce Hain
Website	www.somersetstudioschool.com
Dates of previous inspection	15 and 16 March 2018, under section 5 of the Education Act 2005

Information about this school

- Since the previous inspection, the school has become independent from Writhlington School and no longer shares leadership or teaching staff.
- The school does not use any alternative provision.
- The school meets the requirements of the provider access legislation, which requires schools to provide pupils in Years 8 to 13 with information and engagement about approved technical education qualifications and apprenticeships.

Information about this inspection

The inspectors carried out this graded inspection under section 8 of the Education Act 2005.

- Inspections are a point-in-time judgement about the quality of a school's education provision.
- This was the first routine inspection the school received since the COVID-19 pandemic began. Inspectors discussed the impact of the pandemic with the school and have taken that into account in their evaluation of the school.
- Inspectors held discussions with the headteacher, other senior leaders, the SENDCo, subject leaders, members of the local governing body, the school improvement partner, the chief executive officer of the trust and a trustee.
- Inspectors carried out deep dives in these subjects: English, science and technology, including engineering. For each deep dive, inspectors discussed the curriculum with subject leaders, visited a sample of lessons, spoke to teachers, spoke to some pupils about their learning and looked at samples of pupils' work.
- To evaluate the effectiveness of safeguarding, inspectors: reviewed the single central record; took account of the views of leaders, staff and pupils; and considered the extent to which the school has created an open and positive culture around safeguarding that puts pupils' interests first.
- Inspectors considered responses to the online survey for parents, Ofsted Parent View, including free-text comments. Inspectors also considered responses to the staff survey and responses to the survey for pupils.

Inspection team

Kelly Olive, lead inspector

His Majesty's Inspector

Christine Lacey

Ofsted Inspector

The Office for Standards in Education, Children's Services and Skills (Ofsted) regulates and inspects to achieve excellence in the care of children and young people, and in education and skills for learners of all ages. It regulates and inspects childcare and children's social care, and inspects the Children and Family Court Advisory and Support Service (Cafcass), schools, colleges, initial teacher training, further education and skills, adult and community learning, and education and training in prisons and other secure establishments. It assesses council children's services, and inspects services for children looked after, safeguarding and child protection.

If you would like a copy of this document in a different format, such as large print or Braille, please telephone 0300 123 1231, or email enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk.

You may reuse this information (not including logos) free of charge in any format or medium, under the terms of the Open Government Licence. To view this licence, visit www.nationalarchives.gov.uk/doc/open-government-licence/, write to the Information Policy Team, The National Archives, Kew, London TW9 4DU, or email: psi@nationalarchives.gsi.gov.uk.

This publication is available at <http://reports.ofsted.gov.uk/>.

Interested in our work? You can subscribe to our monthly newsletter for more information and updates: <http://eepurl.com/iTrDn>.

Piccadilly Gate
Store Street
Manchester
M1 2WD

T: 0300 123 1231
Textphone: 0161 618 8524
E: enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk
W: www.gov.uk/ofsted

© Crown copyright 2024